

Don DeLillo's *White Noise*: Whiter is the Postmodern Consumerist Condition Taking the People?

Mohammad Exir

Islamic Azad University/Bushehr, Iran

Key words: consumerism, human identity, postmodern, *White Noise*, Don DeLillo

ABSTRACT

DeLillo's sturdy, lyrical, precise novels are considered classics of American postmodern literature. First published in 1984, *White Noise* by Don DeLillo is concerned with the emergence of technology, the power of images, popular culture, and the pervasiveness of the media. The influence of DeLillo's brief experience with advertising is clearly observed in many of his works, particularly *White Noise*, which deals with product placements and commercials and mirrors the author's sensitivity to the power of consumerism. Consumerism also has serious effects on people's identity; it has the capability to shape it with possessions: what a person wears, where one lives, to what extent does one fit the social and political stereotypes of one's gender all culturally determine who one is. This postmodern identity gets complicated by technology—since the dialogue of television affects the people's consciousness, they relate their lives more to the media than to reality per se; people use the media to specify other groups of people as the “enemy” or as the “other.” DeLillo maintains that consumerism and technology have oddly disembodied the physical body; he implies that materialism is the basis of human identity. DeLillo views the human subject as being further disembodied by the penetration of death and disaster in postmodern American culture. He also sees that technology has complicated the human body and identity to such an extent that everything must be deciphered, even ourselves. *White Noise* is concerned with the extremes and limits of this culture. According to DeLillo, in the late twentieth century, consumerism and materialism have become the mediums through which people identify one another in life as well as death. In *White Noise*, Don DeLillo presents a clear picture of the postmodern toxic world in which people are not provided with any real certainty, but rather with a fear of death and fatal diseases. This paper is an attempt to trace the negative effects of consumerism on people in the postmodern condition in Don DeLillo's *White Noise*.